



An Investigation about Relationship between Citizenship Education and Ethnicity and Its Effect on Electoral Behavior at the Regions Level of Observation and Analysis

Shida Shafiee Lotfabadi¹

Ali Rahmani Firoozjah² (Corresponding author)

Ali Asghar Abbasi Esfajir³

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: 09 September 2020 Revised: 31 January 2021 Accepted: 02 February 2021 Online: 03 December 2021</p>	<p>One of the effects of citizenship education is the change of ethnic identity in favor of national identity through the institutionalization of the concept of "common identity" in the younger generation. However, electoral behaviors have shown that individuals' ethnocentric actions can affect the achievement of citizenship education goals. The purpose of this study was to investigate relationship between citizenship education and ethnicity and its effect on electoral behavior at the level of observation and analysis of regions. The research is a comparatively qualitative research using grounded theory. Based on Bray & Thomas Cube, level of observation and analysis were two cities of Bojnourd and Shirvan in North Khorasan province, Iran. The research population included three groups of faculty members, students and secondary school teachers. Targeted sampling method - with snowball approach - was used to select the research sample. Researchers used semi-structured interviews to collect data and content analysis using thematic content analysis. The findings showed the content of textbooks and school activities is not devoted to citizenship education, and existing content of textbooks is not appropriate for ethnic citizenship education. The finding indicates that there are many similarities between each of the two geographical regions in terms of ethnicity and the status of its components, and neither of these components is currently affected by citizenship education. Another finding indicates the lack of relationship between citizenship and ethnicity and electoral behavior in the observed areas. The latest research findings reveal that there is no significant difference between the two communities in terms of each of the factors studied. According to the findings, increasing the content related to modern citizenship education as well as multicultural citizenship education in school textbooks and extracurricular activities in schools seems necessary.</p>
<p>KEY WORDS</p> <p>Citizenship Education Ethnicity Political Behavior Social Inequality</p>	

¹ Ph.D. Student, Department of Economic Sociology and Development, Babol Branch, Islamic Azad University, Babol, Iran, Email: sheida.shafie2020@gmail.com

² Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Babol Branch, Islamic Azad University, Babol, Iran, Email: alirahmanifiroozjah@yahoo.com

³ Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Babol Branch, Islamic Azad University, Babol, Iran, Email: asfajir@hotmail.com

1. Introduction

Iran is a multi-ethnic country whose integration owes much to the coexistence of its various ethnic groups. This ethnic structure includes religious, linguistic, and cultural differences. The presence and life of different ethnicities such as Persians, Turks, Kurds, Baluchis, Turkmens, Arabs and Lors together - and within the framework of a single political geography - reflects the cultural-ethnic mosaic of Iranian identity and civilization (Bahari, Mohammadi, Bahari; Mohammadi & Bahari, 2020). Although formal statistics on ethnic composition are not available; estimates show high ethnic and linguistic diversity and heterogeneity in this society, so that Iran is among the top 10 countries in the world (Ebrahimabadi, 2011). Therefore, recognizing the impact of ethnicity on the behavior of citizens is essential. In fact, countries with ethnic diversity are always under threat because indicators such as ethnic composition, legitimacy of the political system, geographical location of ethnic groups, especially with neighboring countries, and the degree of internal cohesion of an ethnic group can threaten a country's security (Hesabi, 2017). Also, because of ethnic differences in customs, religion, values, and economic interests, ethnic-centered individual and social behavior can be a potential source of undermining citizenship, identity, and national cohesion (UNESCO, 2009).

In addition, the multiplicity of ethnic groups automatically affects various aspects of citizens' behavior, such as their social and political behavior. Research findings show that Iran is currently facing challenges in terms of ethnicity. The most important of these challenges are as below: 1. Increased political, social and cultural demands by ethnic groups; 2. growth of societies and archeology centers; 3. growth of artistic, literary, and student and non-student associations; 4. Increase local press; 5. Intense local competition between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples; 6. Increasing demand for promotion opportunities in administrative-political positions; 7. Increasing social anomalies among ethnic groups, especially border tribes (smuggling of goods, transit of drugs) 8. Request for equal distribution of economic and industrial facilities & investments; and 9. formation of ethnic feelings among the people of different regions (Mahmoudi, Afzali, Zaki & Yazdanpanah, 2019; Akbari Vafkhari, 2017; Faraji Rad & Kazemian, 2017). Naturally, resolving and managing these cases requires the use of various measures and tools. One of the effective tools is to use political mechanisms such as elections. In multicultural societies, participation in elections is a common mechanism for achieving ethnic goals. This event is not purely political and has become a social and cultural phenomenon. Active participation in elections is the main tool that forces government officials to be accountable to the people and accept their oversight. Also, the election output reflects the overt and covert demands of different groups in society (Salehnia & Bakhtiari, 2020). Citizens' behavior as a political act influencing election results in many societies is influenced by

ethnic structure. For this reason, the emphasis on ethnic characteristics has been the focus of selective competition and is one of the elements used by elites and political parties. The study of voting patterns in different regions of Iran well shows the effect of ethnicity on the electoral behaviors of individuals (Akbari & Fakhari, 2017).

One of the provinces of Iran, which is known as the "treasure of cultures" due to ethnic and cultural diversity, is North Khorasan (Management and Planning Organization, 2016). In addition to its geographical proximity to Turkmenistan, this province consists of five ethnic groups: Kurdish (0.46), Fars (0.28), Turk (0.20), Turkmen (0.5), Baluch, etc. (0.1). (Management and Planning Organization, 2016, 55-1). Common languages in this province include Persian, Tati, Razi, Kermanji Kurdish, Turkmen and Khorasani Turkish. Also, according to governmental census of 2011, about 85% of the population of the province are Shiites and the rest are Sunnis (Mahmoudi et al., 2019). In terms of economic status, Kurds and Turks are superior to other ethnic groups for reasons such as ownership of better natural habitats, access to transportation hubs and important urban centers (Akbari & Fakhari 2017).

During the last four decades that the political system of the Islamic Republic has been established, the ethnic diversity of North Khorasan and its economic and social consequences have influenced people's political actions. For example, recently Akbari & Fakhari (2017) have found that in this province there is a significant relationship between ethnic demands and voting pattern. Naturally, in this situation, the attention of Iranian politicians is focused on finding solutions to reduce ethnic challenges in regions such as North Khorasan. The main question for politicians is how in ethnically diverse regions, people's political actions - in events such as the election of a member of parliament - can be directed towards maintaining national unity and avoiding extra attention to ethnic interests - rather than country interests . One answer is to rely on education and emphasize its role in training the younger generation. The basic assumption is that citizenship education can change the mindset of the young generation of different ethnic groups and educate them in a way that avoids extreme respect for their ethnic identity (Mehrpour 2015). If we consider this hypothesis logical and believe in the role of citizenship education, in the next step we should try to understand what is the relationship between the components of citizenship education and ethnic elements. Also, how the combination of these two can affect the dimensions of a political behavior - for example Electoral behavior. Considering the ethnic characteristics of North Khorasan province, the purpose of this study was to analyze the relationship between citizenship education and ethnicity and its effect on electoral behavior at the regional level of observation and analysis. According to this goal, the sub-objectives of the research are:

- Identifying the situation of selected geographical regions in terms of components of citizenship education
- Identify the status of selected Geographical regions in terms of ethnic elements
- Identifying and explaining the relationship between the components of citizenship education and ethnic elements with electoral behavior
- Identify the similarities and differences between the role of citizenship education and ethnicity in electoral behavior.

In the next section, an overview of the theoretical framework (components of citizenship education, elements of ethnicity and electoral behavior) and research literature is considered.

2. Theoretical Framework & Research Literature

The theoretical framework of the study consists of three factors: Citizenship education, ethnicity and electoral behavior and their relationship with each other (Figure 1).

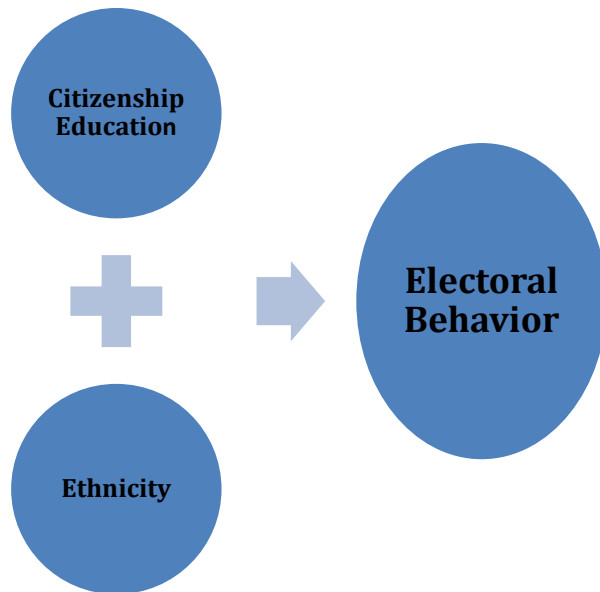


Figure 1. Vertical equation of the three factors of citizenship education, ethnicity and electoral behavior

This Vertical Equation is used to represent successive steps or tasks to represent a rational result. Accordingly, the logical relationship between the components of citizenship education and dimensions of ethnicity can lead to an appropriate electoral behavior. This equation also shows the important effect of citizenship education on the other two elements. Regarding the first factor, it should be said that the concepts of citizenship and citizenship education during the last two decades have attracted the attention of many thinkers in various scientific and interdisciplinary fields. One of the important aspects of citizenship education in the field of political science is its role in raising children, adolescents and young people for peaceful coexistence in a society that has a multi-ethnic, racial, religious and linguistic context (Esman 2004). In fact, all governments seek to nurture individuals through citizenship education - regardless of race, ethnicity, language or culture - in a way that preserves the country and national unity. This educational goal is a long process that starts from childhood and continues within the framework of the formal education system until the end of higher education (Mohammadi, Mazidi & Beheshti, 2017).

Citizenship education is the most important tool of rational political systems for promoting and institutionalizing national identity - by promoting a sense of patriotism, overcoming limited ethnic interests, and modern citizenship-based behavior - in the younger generation. Thus, citizenship education focuses on teaching such things as respecting learners and their culture, emphasizing the role of the school in shaping students' identities, attention to the hidden curriculum, importance of talking and listening to students' voices, and more attention to marginalized ethnic groups, and emphasizes the need to turn schools into places to practice citizenship rights and responsibilities (Michelle & Mary 2020). Also, the general dimensions of citizenship education can be divided into three groups: Cognitive, emotional and behavioral. The cognitive dimension includes components such as knowledge about government, human rights, political groups & parties, and social classes. The emotional dimension includes respect for values and tradition, respect for the opinions of others, optimism and positivity, and philanthropy. Behavioral dimension also refers to education about legality, pragmatism and empiricism, participation and cooperation, responsibility and rational confrontation with life events (Qaltash 2012; Malazehi, Yarmohammadian & Shah Talebi, 2019; Mohammadi, Mazidi & Beheshti, 2017).

Another key element in the present study is ethnicity. One of the most common terms in social research, which is associated with many conceptual complexities, is ethnicity. An ethnic group is a small community of human beings within a larger community who actually or

emotionally and perceptually share a common ancestry, shared memories, and shared historical-cultural past (Dein, 2006). Individuals of an ethnic group also have one or more symbolic examples such as kinship, religion, language, territory, and physical appearance characteristics that distinguish their group identity from other groups (Hammer, McFarland, Zernika et al., 2020). The main dimensions of ethnicity are: ethnic self-awareness, mother tongue and ancestral land. Psychological characteristics (mental states), lifestyle or a certain type of socio-territorial organization (government) or the obvious desires and inclinations of individuals of a nation to establish a government organization can also be among the characteristics of ethnic groups (Banton 2015). However, different ethnic groups within a country can be examined from different angles. One of these aspects is political behavior. From the perspective of political science, ethnic elites and ethnocentric political organizations are the main factor in the growth of ethnic tendencies (Bieber, 2018). For this reason, the efforts of political systems to maintain national unity and territorial integrity can sometimes face ethnic obstacles because ethnic preferences generally mean protecting the interests of the people regardless of national considerations (Heidari, 2012).

However, the three main patterns determine the nature of the ethnic policies of multi-ethnic communities at specific times. These three models are: Assimilation, pro-equality pluralism, and unequal pluralism (Francipane 2015). The goal of replication policies is to combine the biological, cultural, social, and psychological composition of distinct groups in order to create a society without ethnic differences. According to the second model, all cultural and ethnic groups are accepted and belong to a larger political and social system through participation and coexistence - while maintaining their differences. The third model or systems of unequal pluralism are guided by policies that structurally separate ethnic groups from each other and strengthen the very unequal distribution of power and benefits (Salehi Amiri, 2009).

One role of ethnic politics is the presence of people at election events - to elect individual such as the president, members of parliament and representatives of city councils. Therefore, recognizing ethnic preferences, actions of individuals and patterns of electoral behavior in multiethnic societies is very important. The main sociological models of electoral behavior analysis have been proposed by Columbia University sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld (Antunes, 2010). These models are a) Political psychological model: A) According to which electoral behavior is a process that is related to the habits and learning of the individual in childhood and the decision of voters is more dependent on psychological factors. B) The pattern of political trust: indicates an attitude in

which the individual feels that she / he participates in influencing and controlling political processes; C) Rational election model: Based on that, the voter chooses from among the programs announced by the candidates, each one that serves his own interests. D) Reference group model: a person participates in elections based on following the behavior of certain individuals or groups; E) Party identity model: is based on the psychological attachment of people to parties and party affiliation is the most important variable to explain the votes of voters and F) Ethnic model: which shows that the key to understanding electoral and partisan behavior in transition societies is the phenomenon of ethnicity. In this model, identity traits such as ethnic ties, through kinship ties, language, historical ties and myths, religious beliefs, and tribal traditions influence individuals' electoral behavior.

In addition to a brief explanation of the theoretical aspects of three elements of research, it is necessary to refer to the findings of some previous studies. The two concepts of citizenship education and ethnicity are interdisciplinary concepts that have attracted the attention of sociologists, political scientists, and educators. In the field of sociology, ethnicity affects the process of socialization. In political science, the positive and negative effects of ethnicity on citizenship and its political effects are considered, and in educational sciences, the role of citizenship education on reducing the negative effects of ethnicity is emphasized. However, the effect of ethnicity on political events is visible in all societies. For example, the International Organization for Migration (2019) cites ethnic diversity as a source of conflict in much of Western Europe. Branton (2009) examines the role of race and ethnicity in the US congressional primary found that the larger the African-American population in a geographic area, the higher the number of African-American candidates in the election. Gimpel & Wendick (2004) revealed that in the United States, cities with white ethnicities are more likely to favor Republicans, while cities with new immigrant groups are more willing to vote for Democrats.

In Iran, various studies have been conducted on the status of citizenship education in school textbooks. For example, the researches of Amini, (2012); Kayhan (2015), Sadeghi (2012) and Shah Talebi, Gholizadeh & Sharifi (2010) highlighted that school textbooks and curricula are not devoted to citizenship education. There are also many studies on ethnic and the role of ethnicity. For example, Mahmoudi, Afzali, Zaki & Yazdanpanah (2019) in evaluating the patterns of policy and ethnic management in Iran have concluded that uneven economic development and socio-political inequality, ideological treatment of ethnic groups, non-compliance with ethnic law, bureaucratic

system and centralism are considered as factors in the failure of ethnic policies. Aslani & Maliki Kamchi (2016) by examining the role of media in ethnic convergence in the city of Urmia, West of Iran indicated that the perception of ethnic use of new media and information has strengthened differentiation and fragmentation more than social integration and cohesion and ethnic convergence. Rahmati (2015) while compiling the ethnic and geographical culture and monograph of the cities and villages of North Khorasan, refers to the resident ethnic groups, common language, and their population. Jafari, Moghimi Moghim & Azimian Ghahramanlou (2015) have explained the local languages and dialects, songs and music, clothes, oral culture and differences of ethnic groups live in North Khorasan province in different historical periods. Jafari (2015) by statistical and geographical analysis of ethnic groups living in the settlements of North Khorasan believes that the ethnic and religious composition in this province is such that it has provided a kind of geopolitical weakness for the Islamic Republic of Iran. Qaderzadeh and Abdollahzadeh (2012) showed that with the expansion of inter-ethnic relations and increasing their awareness and knowledge about each other, intercultural sensitivities are adjusted and reduced. Iraqieh (2010) analyzed the content of eight school textbooks and found that the issue of ethnicity in these books has a neglected and marginal position and curriculum planners are reluctant to devote the content of books to this subject. The results of Afzalio Zarghami (2009) revealed that ethnic pluralism in Iran not only did not weaken national security, but also relied on the stable elements of ethnic convergence, consolidating and perpetuating the country's identity. Akhbari & Zolfaghari (2009) with geopolitical analysis of ethnicity emphasized the observance of citizenship rights of ethnic groups. In sum, previous research has paid less attention to the relationship between citizenship education and ethnicity. Also, these studies have not examined the relationship between the two variables of citizenship education and ethnicity with electoral behavior. In addition, the relationship between these variables has not been considered at the regional geographical level by previous researchers.

3. Research Method

This is a comparatively qualitative research using Grounded Theory approach. The selection of the research sample was done in two stages: First, the level of observation and analysis was geographical region and two cities of Bojnourd and Shirvan were purposefully selected (Macro level: Distracts). According to Bray and Thomas Cube, comparative research is not limited to comparing countries and can also be done on research topics that examine the performance of a large population (Bray & Thomas, 1995 as cited in Bray, Adamson & Mason, 2007). In fact, comparative studies at the regional level are useful when intra-provincial diversity or the density of

national / provincial statistics and data is unreliable and leads to the neglect of interregional diversity (Bray & Thomas, 1995, quoted by Bray, Adamson & Mason, 2007, p. 57). The selection of these two cities was based on two criteria: a) their important economic and social status and b) ethnic diversity. The second at the micro level includes all faculty members and humanities students of State universities, Payame Noor University and Islamic Azad University and secondary school teachers of Bojnourd and Shirvan. To select the research sample, criteria such as familiarity with the election process in Iran (citizenship education), participation background in elections as a voter or observer of the ballot box, and belonging to an ethnic group were considered. In both macro and micro levels, purposive sampling method was used to select the sample. Data collection was done through semi-structured interviews - group and individual formats - (Table 1).

Table 1: Characteristics of research sample based on interview method

Code of interview	Interviewees	Interview style	Number
1	Students	Focus group interview	16
2	Teachers	Individual interview	6
3	Faculty Members	Roundtable	3

The procedure for collecting data at this stage was that first 16 students (8 people from each city) were selected by snowball approach and divided into four focal groups and interview questions were given to them. After recording and implementing the students' opinions, the initial coding was done, which resulted in achieving 123 items. These codes were then given to 6 teachers. At this stage, 32 axial coding categories were identified. In the third stage, the initial and pivotal codes were provided to 4 scientific members. This step was to determine 7 categories of selective coding. Thematic content analysis method for data analysis and Strauss and Corbin (1990) method were used for coding. To increase the validity of the research, the results of thematic analysis were provided to 2 people in each group of interviewees (6 people in total) and their opinions were applied. Then, the final corrections related to the research results were made by 2 faculty members of the Sociology Department of the Islamic Azad University of Babol.

4. Findings

According to the objectives of the research, the findings are presented in 5 parts. A) Brief description of two selected geographical areas (Bojnourd and Shirvan cities); B) Identifying the situation of selected areas in terms of components of citizenship education; C) Identifying the status of selected areas in terms of ethnic elements; D) Identifying and explaining the relationship between the components of citizenship education and ethnic elements with electoral behavior, and

E) Identifying the similarities and differences between the role of the two factors of citizenship education and ethnicity in electoral behavior. It should also be noted that according to the Bray & Thomas Cube, the findings point to three distinct levels of observation and analysis. These levels are the spatial level, the level of demographic groups (ethnic groups), and the educational level (citizenship education) (Bray & Thomas, 1995 as cited in Bray, Adamson & Mason, 2007, p. 46).

A) Spatial description

Since the ethnic composition in Bojnourd and Shirvan is higher than other regions of North Khorasan province due to its large population, the present researchers selected these two cities. Bojnourd is the most populous city with about 37% of the population of North Khorasan province. According to the 2016 census, about 87% of the population is literate and ethnically the majority of them are Kurds, Fars, Turkmen and Turks. Shirvan city is located in the northeast of North Khorasan province, which shares a 57-kilometer border with Turkmenistan. In terms of population, Shirvan has about 17% of the total population of the province. According to the 2016 census, about 88% of the population of this city is literate and in terms of ethnicity, the majority of people are Fars, Kurdish and Tat. In terms of levels of observation and analysis, the data show the very similarity of the two geographical regions with each other in terms of demographic (ethnic diversity) and educational aspects (percentage of literate population).

B) Identification of selected areas position in terms of citizenship education components

Based on the analysis of qualitative data obtained from focus group interviews, semi-in-depth and roundtable individual interviews and their compliance with theoretical foundations, 4 main categories related to citizenship education were obtained (Table 2).

The first major component of citizenship education affecting electoral behavior is the lack of content and educational program in the current Iranian education system. Thus, all three groups of interviewees mentioned several cases in this regard. For example, one of the students says:

"Citizenship education is a new topic in the world. I have not seen much about it in school textbooks during my 12 years as a student" (Interviewee 5).

Another student also points out that:

"Because Iranian textbooks for students across the country - in all grades - are the same, the issue they do not pay attention to at all is the ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity of different regions" (Interviewee 9)

Table 2: Axial and selective components of citizenship education affecting electoral behavior

Axial Components	Selective Components
Small amount of content related to citizenship education, lack of content related to multicultural citizenship, low value for identifying ethnic differences, disregard for linguistic differences	Lack of educational content and program
Lack of regular educational courses by educational levels from primary to secondary school, lack of courses based on ethnic coexistence education	Lack of training courses
Contradiction between family beliefs and content of formal curriculum, Contradiction between practice in society with content of training courses, non-observance of neutrality of governmental organization	Contradiction of family education with school
Separation of national culture from indigenous culture, domination of the Persian people, disregard for ethnic culture, rejection of cultural diversity, lack of cultural democracy, education of mono-ethnic citizenship, extreme emphasis on national culture instead of emphasis on cultural solidarity	Dominance of culture dominates on curriculum

In this regard, one of the teachers believes:

"I give my student friends the right to be dissatisfied with the content of the books. Of course, the purpose of the formal education system is to preserve the unity of the country. However, yes, they are right. We do not. This is a fundamental weakness" (Interviewee No. 17).

In fact, the centralized structure of textbook writing in Iran has led students to follow a formal education structure during the 12-year period of general education for students in different parts of Iran - regardless of racial, linguistic, ethnic, or cultural differences. However, the Ministry of Education has tried to publish and make available to students for some grades - especially in the first and second years of high school and in the course "Social Studies" - a supplementary book - for each province. In this regard, one of the faculty members says:

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In fact, the centralized structure of textbook production in Iran has led students in different parts of the country - regardless of their racial, linguistic, ethnic, and cultural differences - to follow the same formal educational structure. However, the Ministry of Education has tried to publish a supplementary book about each provinces - especially in the secondary education level and in the school subject of "Social Studies" -and make it available to all pupils. In this regard, one of the faculty members says:

"I have personally reviewed the contents of all textbooks for grades one to twelve. Even in social science textbooks, topics such as ethnic culture identification, multicultural citizenship education, and ethnic democracy education have been overlooked" (Interviewee 23).

Another component related to citizenship education is the lack of training courses in formal programs and extracurricular activities in Iranian schools:

"Extracurricular activities in schools often focus on the political and social issues of the whole country. During the 12 years of formal general education, I do not remember once, even once playing Turkish or Kurdish music in our school" (Interviewer 6).

In fact, the lack of serious attention to student education has been emphasized mainly by teachers and school principals in a negative rather than positive way. For example, one student says:

"Well, yes. Children are usually very mischievous. I remember sometimes making ethnic jokes with my friends - who were of different ethnicities. Sometimes the children quarreled and our principal and teachers punished us for making fun of each other" (interviewee 12).

Another student confirms his friend's words:

"Schools and teachers had no specific goal or program to teach citizenship education in a pluralistic ethnic and linguistic community. They still do not. In my opinion, they are only thinking of teaching the content of whole book."

In this regard, one of the teachers says:

"The Ministry of Education and its superiors insist that the school curriculum be done within the set framework. Some teachers have really no more time. Of course, social science teachers also have their own limitations. However, ethnic citizenship education is a sensitive issue "(Interviewee 19).

This situation is also confirmed by faculty members. According to the interviewees, the third component is the conflict between family education and school. Interviewees referred to issues such as the conflict between family beliefs and content of the formal curriculum, conflict between action in society and content of training courses, and lack of neutrality of State and government institutions:

"Look, as a child I have heard many stories from my father about the Kurds and their history, migration and bravery, but there was no mention of these stories in the textbooks. Well, of course I have not read anything about other ethnic groups. That's why at school, children cooked for each other. A student said we are brave and his classmate said no, we are brave" (With a loud laugh) (Interviewee 7).

A faculty member says:

"It is necessary for the government and the Ministry of Education to pay more attention to ethnic diversity - especially in regional such as North Khorasan, which is a reservoir of ethnic and linguistic diversity- . It is now a time of globalization and societies are moving towards multiculturalism" (Interviewee 26).

Another component refers to the role of the dominant culture of the society on school curriculum in citizenship education and issues such as separation of national culture from indigenous culture, domination of the Fars race, disregard for ethnic culture, rejection of cultural diversity, lack of cultural democracy, multiethnic citizenship education, and extremist emphasis on cultural solidarity instead of national culture. For example, one student says:

"As Farsi is the main language of textbooks, many children in primary schools and especially in rural regions have difficulty of understanding of contents of the textbook. Also, the meaning of education is limited to the observance of the law by the people, while the government and school are responsible for the culture of the people. Many local languages are now being extinct" (Interviewee 10).

According to the components of citizenship education determined by the interviewees, in the next step, this question was raised: "Is there a difference between the two geographical areas from the participants' point of view?" One of the students says:

"I also lived in Shirvan for a few years because of my father's job as a member of the army, and I am quite familiar with the culture and people there. In my opinion, there is not much difference in terms of citizenship education between these two cities" (Interviewer 13).

The majority of participants agree with this view because they do not think the content of textbooks and school activities are very different. However, it is generally accepted by political scientists that citizenship education can shape individuals' political behavior.

C) Identification of selected regions status in terms of ethnic components

Analysis of qualitative data obtained from focus group interviews, semi-in-depth and round individual interviews and their compliance with theoretical foundations for the ethnic factor in the two selected cities of North Khorasan province shows the active role of the three main categories (Table 3).

Table 3: Axial and selective components of ethnicity affecting electoral behavior

Axial Components	Selective Components
Ethnic identity, acceptance of ethnic and linguistic diversity in the region, pride in the past, historical differences, ethnic demands, social interactions with other ethnic groups	Ethnic Multiplicity
Unequal economic development, organizational discrimination, prevalence of social crimes, weakening of social capital, unequal distribution of economic capital, perception and feeling of inequality	Social Inequality
Explicit and covert ethnic superiority, traditional ethnocentric institutions, emphasis on ethnic solidarity, prioritization of ethnic preferences over collective interests, self-labeling	Ethnic Segregation

The first major component of the ethnicity factor is ethnic pluralism. Data analysis shows that issues such as ethnic identity, acceptance of ethnic and linguistic diversity in the region, pride in the past, historical differences, ethnic demands, and social interactions with other ethnic groups are quite evident in the social structure of the two regions. For example, one student explicitly refers to a full awareness of ethnic identity:

"In my opinion, in these two cities, everyone is fully aware of her/his ethnic identity and refers to it in everyday life and issues. For example I always say that: my mother is Fars and my father is Turk" (interviewee 11).

Also, in the speeches of all the interviewees, it was proudly emphasized that, in principle, this geographical region has always been immigrant-friendly and there is a great deal of inter-ethnic mixing. Therefore, ethnic pluralism and coexistence of thematic ethnic groups is fully accepted. In other words, the education of ethnic citizenship started within the family system and basically people did not need to learn it much. Despite this view which is based on current realities in these two geographical areas, there are still issues such as ethnic demands that require more thought. Another component related to ethnicity is the existence of social inequalities. Unequal economic development between Bojnourd and Shirvan is rooted in the policies of various governments over the past century. For example, one teacher says:

"There is a general belief that in the previous regime, governmental budgets were allocated more to Shirvan and Bojnourd was lagging behind. In this regime, Bojnourd

is the capital of the province, while the people of Shirvan do not like this very much"
(Interviewee 20).

Also, issues such as the existence of hidden ethnic discrimination in government organizations, unequal distribution of economic capital and the prevalence of social crimes have fueled the perception of ethnic inequality and weakened the social capital of all ethnic groups. The last component refers to ethnic segregation, meaning that overt and covert ethnic superiority, especially in access to sources of wealth and power, the existence of traditional ethnic-oriented institutions, and the emphasis on ethnic solidarity have given priority to ethnic preferences over collective interests. Of course, this does not necessarily mean ethnocentrism when viewed in a macro-structure as an urban community. This is well evident in the sentences of one of the faculty members:

"The existence of ethnic inequalities in Bojnourd and Shirvan has not led to ethnocentrism and intensification of conflicts between different ethnic groups, and therefore a distinction should be made between ethnic social feeling and ethnicity. The social feeling of some ethnic groups is better and some is weaker. The social, cultural, and economic dimensions of ethnic groups differ from one another without a strong sense of ethnicity (interviewee 26).

Thus, today's social, cultural, and economic characteristics of individuals are more influential than ethnic identity in determining their political behavior.

D) Identify and explain the relationship between components of citizenship education and ethnic elements with electoral behavior

One question of interview was about relationship between of citizenship education components and ethnic elements from the perspective of the three groups of interviewees. Data analysis showed two types of answers: First, all three groups agreed that citizenship education can have a positive effect on different elements of ethnicity in both geographical regions. The effect of citizenship education on the component of ethnic pluralism reduces differences and increases understanding between ethnic groups. In this regard, one of the students says:

"Citizenship education can teach children to compare their customs and traditions with others and find out their similarities and differences. In my opinion, this comparison is necessary in a society like North Khorasan because it shows to our children that the amount of similarities is more than differences" (interviewee 6).

Also, in the opinion of most of the interviewees, citizenship education can reduce social inequalities between ethnic groups. Through educating the younger generation can train employees whom are able to resist any organizational discrimination. Also, citizenship education can reduce the prevalence of social crimes among ethnic groups. In this regard, one of the teachers says:

"I think schools are the best place to teach prevention of crime. Now we are facing gender discrimination between men and women among some ethnic groups, while the literacy rate of people in both cities is more than 80%, but unfortunately some beliefs and traditions have not changed. Citizenship education teaches that there should be no discrimination between ethnic groups and men and women" (Interviewee 18).

The second answer of the participants regarding the relationship between citizenship education and the components of ethnicity was focused on the current situation in the two geographical regions. The first point emphasized by the interviewees is the distinction between government-oriented citizenship education and ethnic-oriented citizenship education. A faculty member says:

"Iran school textbooks are more about educating government-oriented citizens. In this type of education, a good citizen is someone who is like everyone else, while ethnic citizenship education values ethnic diversity and differences without preferring one ethnic group to another" (Interviewee 23).

Another point is the recognition of all three groups of participants to the neutral status of educational system to provide active and effective citizenship education. In fact, there was a common belief among all interviewees that in practice some teachers and academic elites play a negative role in events such as elections. One of the students believes:

"The direction of citizenship education is not the same as the practical behavior of some elites. For this reason, sometimes educated people prefer ethnic interests to collective interests" (Interviewee 7).

At the same time, we see two different roles of the educational system in each city: First, the neutral role of textbooks and formal activities of schools and universities for citizenship education, and second, the active role of few teachers and faculty members in highlighting ethnic identity through establishment of informal associations and groups.

E) Identification of similarities and differences between role of citizenship education and ethnicity in electoral behavior

Analysis of the contents of the previous sections showed that in both cities, there is no logical and rational relationship between citizenship education and ethnicity and cannot talk with certainty about their impact on electoral behavior (Figure 2).

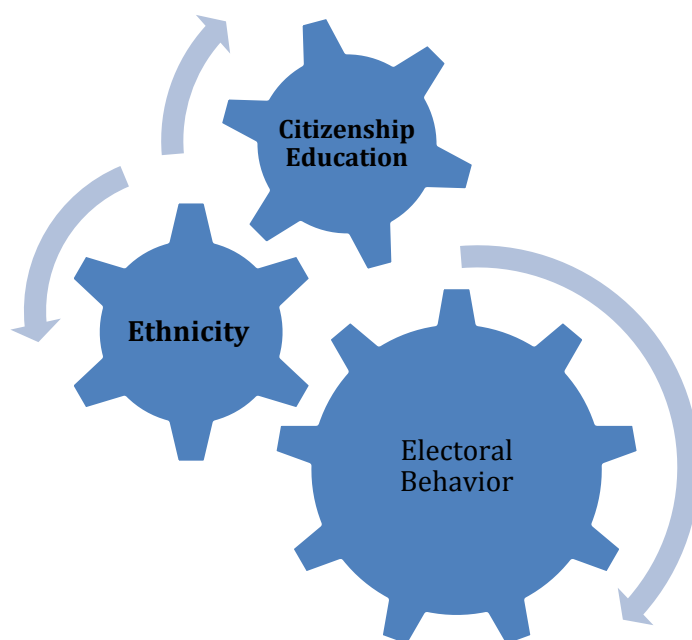


Figure 2: Minimal communication cycle between citizenship education, ethnicity and electoral behavior pattern in selected regions

In fact, citizenship education and its components - such as the content of textbooks and curricula, training courses (including workshops, meetings and conferences), the integration of school education with family system education, ethnic citizenship education and multicultural democracy - does not exist or their direction is not in line with the ethnic factor. Similarly, ethnicity and its effective dimensions - such as social interactions with other ethnic groups, strong social capital, and valuable ethnic history and culture - are affected by economic and social inequalities, unemployment, poverty, and the preference of individual's benefit over ethnic and collective interests, has no significant role in social and political events - such as elections. Thus, it can be inferred that in a situation where citizenship education does not really exist and ethnic identity has lost its past foundations, the voting pattern in both cities is very similar. This similarity indicates the existence of a voting model in which the power of citizenship and ethnicity education is low. Based on this inference, the present researchers did not find much difference between the two selected communities.

5. Conclusion

In this comparatively qualitative study, the researchers tried to examine the electoral behavior considering role of two factors of citizenship education and ethnicity at the regional level of observation. The researchers also aimed to explain that although the goal of political systems in multiethnic and multicultural societies - such as Iran- is to address the issue of ethnicity within their accepted framework but achieving this goal is not necessarily easy. To prove this, the choice of two cities of Bojnourd and Shirvan was made quite consciously to show the extent to which geographical commonality and ethnic differences - in the presence or absence of citizenship education - can influence citizens' political behavior. The first research finding showed that the content of textbooks and school activities is not devoted to citizenship education. In addition, the content of the school textbooks does not fit well with the ethnocentric citizenship education required by selected communities. The inability of the formal education system of Iran to provide citizenship education appropriate to the ethnic status of different geographical regions was also found by Amini, (2012); Kayhan (2015), Sadeghi, (2012) and Shah Talebi, Gholizadeh & Sharifi (2010).

The second finding of the research indicated that there is a lot of similarity between each of the two selected geographical regions in terms of ethnicity and the status of its components, so that neither of these components is currently affected by citizenship education. Thus, there is an

educational gap between multicultural citizenship education and the preparation of the young generation for life in a diverse Iranian society. This result is consistent with the findings of Iraqieh (2010); Mohammadi, Mazidi & Beheshti (2017) and Mollazehi, Yarmohammadian & Shah Talebi (2019). The latest research finding indicates the lack of relationship between two variables of citizenship education and ethnicity with electoral behavior in selected geographical regions. The level of analysis reveals that the education system has not provided the necessary measures to increase the quality of political participation of the young generation in multiethnic societies. Also, the ethnic system in the two selected societies for reasons such as economic inequality, preference of individual interests over ethnic and collective interests and the reduction of social capital of ethnic groups do not have much power to influence the political behavior of citizens. This finding is consistent with findings of Hasabi (2017); Faraji Rad & Kazemian (2017); Heidari (2012) and Mahmoudi, Afzali, Zaki & Yazdanpanah (2019). Considering these findings, we can draw the attention of Iranian social and educational policy makers to several facts: First, the content of current programs and textbooks is not very commensurate with the ethnic and social characteristics of different regions of the country. Second, it seems necessary to increase the content related to modern citizenship education as well as multicultural citizenship education in textbooks and extracurricular of schools. Third, it is also suggested that the education system take the necessary measures to strengthen the positive aspects of ethnicity through the education of the young generation - so that it can be used in political behaviors in favor of the national identity and cohesion of the country.

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